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Senate

ON THE DEATH OF STAFF SERGEANT CORY W. BROOKS

Mr. DASCHLE. Madam President, South Dakotans have a proud tradition of military service and volunteerism. Today, in Iraq, a new generation is carrying that tradition forward. South Dakota's percentage of its citizens serving in active duty in Iraq is among the highest in the Nation.

The spirit of service and volunteerism runs throughout South Dakota's towns and neighborhoods, and young children grow up learning that they have an obligation to one another, to their communities, and to their country. The families of South Dakota look upon the service of our young men and women with great pride, because they are carrying the values of South Dakota across the world and bringing freedom to the people around the world and the people of Iraq.

Alongside our pride for our soldiers' service comes an awareness of the cost. As our soldiers shoulder much of the burden of battle, so, too, must our communities shoulder a greater burden of grief.

We were reminded of this yet again this past week.

On April 19, SGT Keith O'Donnell, a native of McIntosh, SD, and a member of the 141st Engineer Combat Battalion in the North Dakota National Guard, was injured when an explosive device detonated during his patrol.

South Dakota this week also mourns the death of Staff Sgt. Cory Brooks, from Philip, SD. SGT Brooks was a Combat Engineer in the 153rd Engineer Battalion. SGT Brooks' death comes just 1 week after the death of another member of the 153rd, Specialist Dennis Morgan, from Winner, SD.

Cory Brooks was typical of South Dakota's youth. He grew up playing backyard wiffle ball in the summertime and football in the fall. He was a loving son, a

good student, and a caring friend.

Ray Rhodes, the father of Cory's closest friend and one of Cory's high school football coaches said, "He was just like family. He was one of those kids you love to work with. He was very happy-go-lucky." Cory's friend, Ray Coyle, remembered him for his sense of fun and his friendship. "He was a very loyal friend. I could count on him for whatever," he said. "We shared a lot of laughs. Cory was up for anything to have fun."

Perhaps what made Cory most typical of South Dakota's children was his eagerness to serve his country. He joined the National Guard after high school, in 1989, and served continually for the past 15 years. His battalion was deployed in February. Staff SGT Brooks and his comrades were stationed at Forward Operating Base Chosin, south of Baghdad. They were engaged in the difficult and dangerous work of defusing roadside bombs and other explosives. It was the kind of service the friends of Sgt. Brooks would have expected from him: He put himself at greater risk in order to make things safer for those around him.

Forty years ago, President Kennedy noted that no nation "in the history of the world has buried its soldiers farther from its native soil than we Americans or closer to the towns in which they grew up." Cory Brooks learned the values of service growing up in South Dakota. And it is the measure of those values that he and so many other children of my State have volunteered to put their lives at risk to bring freedom and security to people all across the world.

Cory Brooks, like those who preceded him in Iraq, was a hero in the truest sense. His Nation mourns his loss and offers his parents, Darral and Marilyn Brooks, its prayers, its condolences, and its gratitude.